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Almost half of all children are in child care

Almost half of Australia's children attend child care, according to figures released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The report shows the different types of care used.

In June 2002, 49% (1,510,500) of children aged less than 12 years used some type of care. This proportion decreased slightly from 1999 (51%).

For all children, the most commonly used types of formal care were:

- long day care (10%);
- preschool (8%);
- before and/or after school care programs (6%);
- family day care (3%); and
- occasional care (1%).

Of children attending formal care, the proportion attending both long day care and before and/or after school care has increased steadily since 1993.

One-third of children (33%) used informal care, which included care by relatives and friends. In the majority of cases, this care was provided by grandparents. This proportion has declined from 38% in 1993.

Work-related reasons remained the single biggest reason for parents using child care, both formal and informal. The second most common reason for using formal care was that it was "beneficial for the child" (the main reason given for children attending preschool). For informal care, the second most common reason was "personal reasons".

The majority of children who used informal care did so at no cost (89%), whereas almost all children who used formal care paid (92%). Almost half of all formal care, cost less than $20 per week.

Parents of some 6% of children reported that they would like more formal care, similar to the level of demand in 1999. The main types of care required were before and/or after school care, long day care, and occasional care.

Use of care was higher in families with an employed parent. Of working parents, mothers were more likely to make use of particular work arrangements to care for children than fathers (70% compared with 30%). Flexible working hours were the most frequently used option for both parents (22% for fathers and 39% for mothers) closely followed by Permanent part-time work (35% for mothers).

Further information is in **Child Care, Australia, June 2002** (cat. no. 4402.0).

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